

# HIỆU QUẢ CỦA PODCAST VÀ WIKI ĐỐI VỚI KỸ NĂNG NGHE VÀ VIẾT CỦA SINH VIÊN TIẾNG ANH TẠI PHÂN HIỆU KON TUM CỦA ĐẠI HỌC ĐÀ NẴNG

## EFFECTIVENESS OF PODCASTS AND WIKIS ON LISTENING AND WRITING SKILLS OF EFL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DA NANG – CAMPUS IN KONTUM

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**Tóm tắt** - Gần đây, các công cụ Web 2.0 (podcast, wiki, mạng xã hội và blog) được biết đến như nền tảng phát triển việc học ngôn ngữ nói chung và các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ nói riêng. Trong số đó, podcast và wiki được nhiều người thừa nhận là có lợi trong việc nâng cao các kỹ năng nghe và viết cho người học ngôn ngữ. Trong khuôn khổ bài viết này, tác giả nêu lên những lý do khiến các podcast dạy tiếng Anh có thể cải thiện kỹ năng nghe của sinh viên tiếng Anh tại Phân hiệu Kon Tum của Đại học Đà Nẵng. Bài viết tập trung vào các đặc điểm hữu ích của podcast như cung cấp một nguồn tài liệu thực hành nghe phong phú, các chủ đề nghe xác thực, thú vị và cập nhật, dễ tiếp cận và thuận tiện; có nhiều loại podcast đa dạng, đáp ứng nhiều trình độ khác nhau. Đồng thời, các đặc điểm góp phần nâng cao kỹ năng nghe và viết của người học ngôn ngữ như tính xác thực và di động của podcast cũng như những bài tập viết hợp tác trong môi trường wiki cũng sẽ được thảo luận chi tiết hơn.

**Từ khóa** - Giảng dạy ngôn ngữ tiếng Anh; podcast; podcasting; kỹ năng nghe; xác thực; học tập di động; wiki; viết hợp tác

**Abstract** - Recently, Web 2.0 affordances (podcasts, wikis, social networks and blogs) have been known as platforms that facilitate language learning in general and language skills in particular. Among Web 2.0 technologies, podcasts and wikis are widely acknowledged to be beneficial in enhancing language learners' listening and writing skills. Within the scope of this article, the author presents reasons why podcasts for teaching English can improve the listening skill of EFL students at the University of Da Nang-Campus in Kon Tum (UDCK). The article focuses on useful features of podcasts such as provision of a rich source of listening practice with authentic, interesting and up-to-date topics which are highly accessible and convenient; there are various types of podcasts that can satisfy a wide range of levels. It also discusses in detail features that contribute to the enhancement of language learners' listening and writing skills like authenticity and mobility of podcasts as well as collaborative writing tasks in wiki-mediated environment.

**Key words** - English language teaching; podcast; podcasting; listening skill; authentic; mobile learning; wiki; collaborative writing

### 1. Introduction

The development of new technologies has provided language teachers with new ways to support foreign language teaching and learning. Recently, Web 2.0 affordances including podcasts, wikis, social networks and blogs have been found as platforms that facilitate language learning in general and language skills in particular. Among Web 2.0 tools, podcasts and wikis are widely acknowledged to be beneficial in teaching and practising listening and writing skills respectively (Al Fadda & Al Qasim, 2013). A podcast is defined as a media stream that consists of audio files, video files, but it can also contain PDF files (Chan, Chen, & Döpel, 2011). 'A wiki is a freely expandable collection of interlinked Web pages, a hypertext system for storing and modifying information – a database, where each page is easily editable by any user with a form-capable Web browser client' (Leuf & Cunningham, 2001, p. 14). This paper is intended to (1) present ways in which English Language Teaching (ELT) podcasts can improve students' listening skill, (2) make a detailed discussion of the potentialities of podcasts and wikis in improving language learners' listening and writing skills.

### 2. English Language Teaching podcasts and UDCK students' listening skill

The author holds a special interest in employing ELT podcasts in the listening skill due to their suitability for the author's teaching context. Podcasting is a rich source of extra-listening practice that allows students to do listening activities intensively and extensively. It

compensates for limited learning materials at UDCK. In addition, unlike boring content in textbooks, podcasts provide students with a variety of authentic, interesting, and up-to-date topics. When students have an opportunity to experience podcasts that match their own interests, it is certain that they will be willing to learn the listening skill. The problem that most of the author's students are not interested in practising this skill can be solved as a result. Various types of podcasts are also well worth mentioning because they bring the students different benefits. For instance, conversations, interviews, news, and academic lectures help the students to understand real speech; vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, phonetics, pronunciation, and grammatical structures enable the students to obtain information about specific aspects of the target language; jokes, songs, poems, and funny stories encourage the students to do careful listening and make listening learning more relaxing. Moreover, easy accessibility and convenience in use make podcasts valuable to the author's context. Podcast materials can be directly downloaded from the Internet or automatically downloaded if listeners subscribe to their favourite podcasts through Rapid Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. UDCK students can take advantage of this feature of podcasts with their limited computer skill. The author finds it easy for the students to play the recordings of podcasts on their cell phones or MP3, MP4 as the majority of them possess one of these technologies. Some podcasts offer the students transcripts so that they can check what they hear. A great number of podcasts are extremely convenient, for they give the students chance to

try two versions. The first version is spoken at a slower speech rate. In contrast, the rate of speech of the second one is faster. Accessibility and convenience of podcasts inspire UDCK students to engage actively in plenty of listening practice in order to enhance their skill. The most important reason is that podcasts are designed to cater for all English levels. An English listening lesson of an appropriate level motivates the students to do it to the best of their ability. It is also useful in helping the students to overcome anxiety, stress, and pressure when dealing with listening activities. The author considers learning listening through podcasts as the best solution to UDCK students.

### **3. Potentialities of English Language Teaching podcasts in improving learners' listening skill**

ELT podcasts greatly contribute to learners' improvement in the listening skill due to a variety of advantages such as accessibility, authenticity, mobile learning, and availability. Among them, authenticity and mobile learning are regarded as important factors that considerably influence listening proficiency of learners (Al Fadda & Al Qasim, 2013).

#### **3.1. Authenticity**

ELT podcasts are often created by native English speakers or non-native English speakers, and by speakers with slight or heavier accents. They give learners chances to expose to various voices as well as varieties of the target language. Language learners, therefore, can both learn more English and enhance their listening comprehension skill. Besides, authentic podcasts help to narrow the distance between formal and informal English, which make them more suitable to extensive listening. This motivates learners to be more interested in practising their English listening skill during and after the class.

In addition, listening to native and advanced English speakers results in learners' ability to know how words sound when they are strung together and pronounced in natural, faster, and less careful speech. In other words, exposure to authentic listening programme enables learners to achieve bottom-up skills. Rost (2013) affirmed that alongside top-down skills, bottom-up skills promoted learners' listening comprehension. Furthermore, real and authentic materials create more opportunities for English language learners to listen to podcasts of a specific social group of their interest. This activity brings them the feeling that they are a part of that culture. They are inspired to listen more in order to have sound understanding of that social group. The more they listen, the more improvement they achieve.

The crucial roles of authenticity in developing language learners' listening skill are also shown in many other studies. Research findings by Al Fadda and Al Qasim (2013) showed that podcasts were more effective in enhancing Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' proficiency in listening comprehension in comparison with traditional classroom instructions. The reason for this is that podcasts offer learners real conversations. Melanlioglu (2013) examined the impacts

of authentic listening tasks upon listening anxiety and listening comprehension of Turkey eighth-grade students. The results pointed out that authentic tasks used in the listening skill helped to reduce students' listening anxiety and improve their listening comprehension. This is because authentic tasks enabled them to become familiar with problematic situations that prepared them for real-life listening situations. In a study aimed at investigating whether authentic listening practice can improve learners' listening comprehension, Ghaderpanahi (2012) reported that this kind of activity produced positive effects upon the success of the students in performing activities after listening.

#### **3.2. Mobile learning**

Another dominant feature of podcasts that help learners of English language develop their listening skill is the mobility of learning. Mobile learning is learning anywhere at any time with any portable digital tools.

The fact is that podcasts can be played on portable digital devices, namely cell phones, MP3, MP4, etc. besides desktop computers or stereo systems. Clearly, these new technologies can travel together with learners. They allow language learners to listen to podcasts at their convenience. To be specific, listeners have chances to play the recordings on podcasts with a their suitable time rather than fixed study times. They can also do listening activities wherever they like, even outside the classroom. Mobile learning is a practical help. The extension of learning language after class is vital to language acquisition when learners do not have enough time to practise language in class. Moreover, mobile learning helps to reduce their anxiety and improve their comprehension in the listening skill. Listening in informal situations with no pressure of limited time motivates learners to practise listening to English more.

What is more, the mobile leaning of podcasts facilitates self-pace learning and individual practice (Al Fadda & Al Qasim, 2013). When language learners listen to podcasts at their own pace, they are motivated to enhance their listening skill. This is because learners are not threatened by possible failure and are not judged by their peers or teachers. Self-paced learning helps low-level learners to be more confident. In addition, it enables them to be more aware of their own style of learning. Accordingly, learners can explore the best way to promote their listening skills.

Mobile learning holds unique features, namely portability, social interactivity, context sensitivity, connectivity, and individuality. Those attributes make a contribution towards creating more relaxed learning experiences that motivate language learners to pursue difficult and challenging tasks in listening to a foreign language of their choice.

### **4. Potentialities of wikis in improving learners' writing skill**

Wikis have drawn the attention of many researchers and teachers due to their potential for collaborative

writing tasks in language classrooms (see Figure 1). Aydın and Yıldız (2014) affirmed that letting language learners do collaborative writing tasks in the wiki environment made a valuable contribution to the improvement of their writing skills.

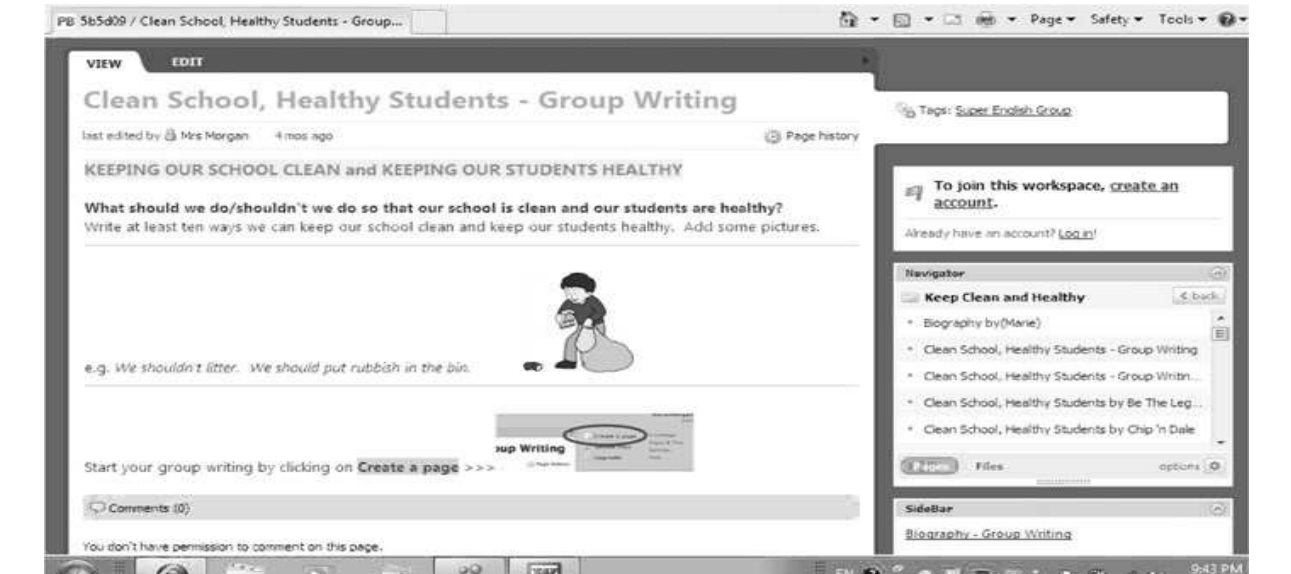


Figure 1: A screen capture of primary five writing frameworks for topics on posters for hygiene

When doing collaborative writing activities in the wikis, learners have chances to add, expand, and reorganize their ideas, and correct errors. Alongside contents, wikis allow learners to revise forms of writing namely grammar, spelling, punctuation, and formatting. For example, findings from Elolaand Oskoz’s (2010) study revealed that in collaborative writing tasks, learners worked on different components of writing such as

content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary. Wiki-based collaborative writing activities enable learners to accurately use grammatical structures most of the time. It can be emphasised that wiki-mediated collaborative writing helps learners achieve a more profound understanding of the topic and language accuracy (see Figure 2).

Posted Comments (6XHSJLJ)	Types of comments
Ivy (SJLJ)/2:41 pm/Feb 2, 2010 "Dad,I want to move to a new flat!!!Ummm...villa is the only flat which fit me!" said Ashley."This sentence is strange.	Content revision oriented-evaluation
Stephanie (SJLJ)/2:42 pm/Feb 2, 2010 live---lived wants--wanted	Surface revision oriented-alteration
Ivy (SJLJ)/2:42 pm/Feb 2, 2010 I think we can change it into "villa is the only type of house which is my favourite!"	Content revision oriented-alteration
Janice (SJLJ)/2:48 pm/Feb 2, 2010 And at that moment,Ashley's brother came back with mum. I think that "and" is innecessary	Surface revision oriented-alteration
Janice (SJLJ)/2:51 pm/Feb 2, 2010 Don't you feel delight?!"said Ashley. It should be "delighted"!!	Surface revision oriented-alteration

Figure 2: Posted Comments

According to Chao and Lo (2011), learner can improve their essay writing with respect to content, structure, and grammar with the assistance of collaborative writing and peer feedback in wikis. Giving and receiving comments in wiki-based writing tasks promote language learners’ consideration of different ways of language use and idea generation. For instance, from their peers’ edits, they can learn how to express different ideas by using various sentences; they can see how their sentences are made to be more complex by changing or adding some words; or they know the way of

making their ideas sound stronger (see Figure 3). The more comments are posted, the more revisions are made, which helps to enhance the quality of students’ writings. In addition, students can write more complex and creative sentences in wikis. Besides, students’ summary writing skill is considerably enhanced after wiki-mediated collaborative writing. It can be concluded that wiki-mediated collaborative writing activities offer learners chances to bridge their gaps in linguistic competence.

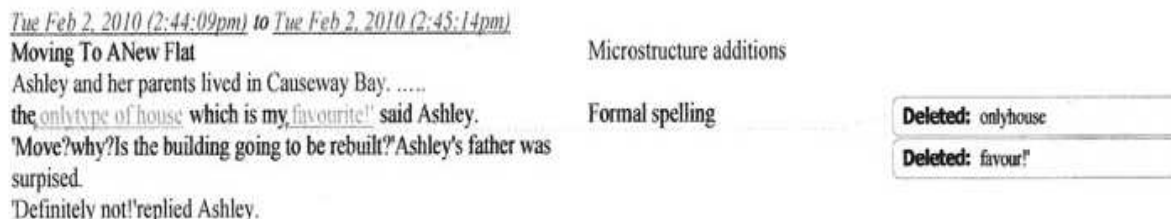


Figure 3. Posted Edits

Numerous research studies have shown that writing in wikis raises students' awareness of readership and enhances their ability to grasp academic genres. Alyousef and Picard (2011) found that students often used hedges and attitude markers in reports. These interpersonal metadiscourse markers are considered as distinctive attributes of academic writing. Moreover, wikis allow learners to contribute to collaborative writing tasks anywhere at any time, even outside the classrooms. In other words, language learners are provided with opportunities to do extra writing practice. Further, in the wiki environment, learners can write at their own pace and evaluate their own performance. Being aware of their strengths as well as weaknesses in writing is very crucial for learners to improve this skill.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, podcasts and wikis foster opportunities for language learners to develop their language skills. Podcasts enhance learners' listening skills due to their authenticity and mobile learning. Wikis create collaborative learning environments which help to develop learners' writing skills. The integration of these new technologies into language classes should be taken into account in order to offer learners an enjoyable foreign language learning experience. It is important that EFL learners be encouraged to employ podcasts and wikis beyond the classroom. This compensates for the lack of chances to practise the target language in the EFL context.

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